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California's Newest Immigrants

By Laura E. Hill and Joseph M. Hayes

Summary

Immigration and immigrant adaptation are an integral part of California's continuing development, and immigrants are an increasing share of the state's population. In 1990, 22 percent of the state's population was foreign-born, and by 2000, this share had risen to 26 percent.

The immigrants who arrived in the intervening decade were slightly more likely to be from Mexico and Central America than in the past, and new immigrants from India became an important, albeit small, component of international migration to California. The majority of immigrants arrive between the ages of 13 and 33, although this is primarily driven by the younger ages of Mexican/Central American immigrants. Immigrants from Asia are somewhat older at the time of migration. Over 40 percent of new immigrants are struggling with the English language, stating that they do not speak English well or at all. Although new immigrants are concentrated in the state's major urban areas, they constitute at least 1 percent of the population in every county.

Over half of new immigrants are in married-couple families with children younger than age 18. Among those new immigrants who are not in family households, approximately equal numbers live in nonrelative and other-relative households. Mexican/Central American immigrant families are more likely than immigrant families from East Asia and Southeast Asia to have children under age 18, to live in crowded housing, and to live in rental housing rather than residences owned by the head of household. Immigrants living in rental housing dedicate a somewhat higher proportion of their household income to housing costs, but these costs (as a share of household income) do not vary much by country of origin.

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In 1990, 22 percent of the state's population was foreign-born, and by 2000, this share had risen to 26 percent.

Educational attainment is very high among some recent immigrants: Over 50 percent of Southeast and East Asian immigrants have at least some college education. Very few have less than a ninth grade education. However, many Mexican/Central American immigrants have very low levels of educational attainment. Over 70 percent lack a high school diploma, and only 11 percent have some college education. Not surprisingly, Mexican/Central American immigrants who have arrived recently are faring poorly relative to the better-educated and older Southeast and East Asian immigrants on a number of well-being measures such as poverty and median family income.

Today's recent immigrants will likely have better outcomes 10 years from now. In comparison to recent immigrants, California's immigrants living in the United States for 10 to 20 years are better off on a number of measures, including educational attainment, family income, poverty rates, employment, rates of home ownership, and English language ability.

Laura E. Hill and Joseph M. Hayes are researchers at the Public Policy Institute of California. Views expressed here do not necessarily reflect those of PPIC. *The authors acknowledge the helpful comments of Timothy Miller, Linda Gage, Fred Silva, Lorien Rice, and Hans Johnson.*

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Context

Twenty-six percent of Californians are immigrants, and 8 percent are recent immigrants—those who arrived in the United States within the past 10 years. This edition of *California Counts* examines the composition, activities, and well-being of the 2.8 million new foreign-born California residents counted in the 2000 census.

Although California policymakers cannot set their own immigration policy—the federal district court's ruling against the legality of Proposition 187 has reinforced this—they can make state and local decisions that affect immigrants' integration into the educational system, the labor force, and society in general. A detailed portrait of who these recent immigrants are, where and how they are living, and how these measures have changed over time is crucial to the success of these policy efforts.

Immigrants with more experience in the United States have had more time to learn English, to take advantage of family or other employment networks, and, in general, to respond to the challenges of living in this country. Many recent immigrants are still struggling with these challenges. Below, we compare the demographics and socioeconomic characteristics of new immigrants in 2000 with those of immigrants who were recent arrivals in California at the time of the 1990 census, describing how the experience of new arrivals has changed over the last decade. We also compare immigrants' experiences 10 to 20 years after arriving in the United States with their experiences in the first 10 years after arrival.

Demographic Characteristics of Recent Immigrants

Nearly half of California's new immigrants were born in Mexico—more than six times the number of new immigrants from any other country (Table 1). Mexico's importance as a sending country has increased since new immigrants were measured in 1990. The next largest country of origin, the Philippines, represented approximately 7 percent of new immigrants in both 2000 and 1990. For the most part, new immigrants in 2000 and 1990 came from the same countries of origin, with a few notable exceptions. India was not in the top 10 sending countries in 1990, but in 2000, it was the fifth largest, accounting for 4 percent of new immigrants. By 2000, both Iran and Laos had fallen out of the top 10 sending countries. In general, Southeast Asian immigrants have represented a decreasing proportion of new immigrants over the decade. Although California

Table 1. Top-Ranking Sending Countries Among Recent Immigrants

Census 2000, Arrived 1991–2000			Census 1990, Arrived 1980–1990		
Rank	Birthplace	Percent	Rank	Birthplace	Percent
1	Mexico	46.2	1	Mexico	38.2
2	Philippines	6.8	2	Philippines	7.5
3	Vietnam	4.7	3	El Salvador	6.0
4	China	3.8	4	Vietnam	5.6
5	India	3.6	5	Korea	3.6
6	El Salvador	3.4	6	China	3.2
7	Korea	2.7	7	Guatemala	2.8
8	Guatemala	2.4	8	Taiwan	2.3
9	Taiwan	1.7	9	Iran	2.1
10	Japan	1.7	10	Laos	1.9
	Other	22.9		Other	26.9
Total no. of immigrants		2,816,785	Total no. of immigrants		3,288,300

Source: Authors' calculations using 1990 and 2000 census data, Integrated Public Use Microdata Series (IPUMS).
Note: Because of differences in data coding, we must consider recent arrivals in the 1990 census as those who arrived in the 11 years spanning 1980 to 1990. When we expanded the 2000 cohort to 11 years, we found 4,239,602 recent immigrants rather than the 2.8 million described above.

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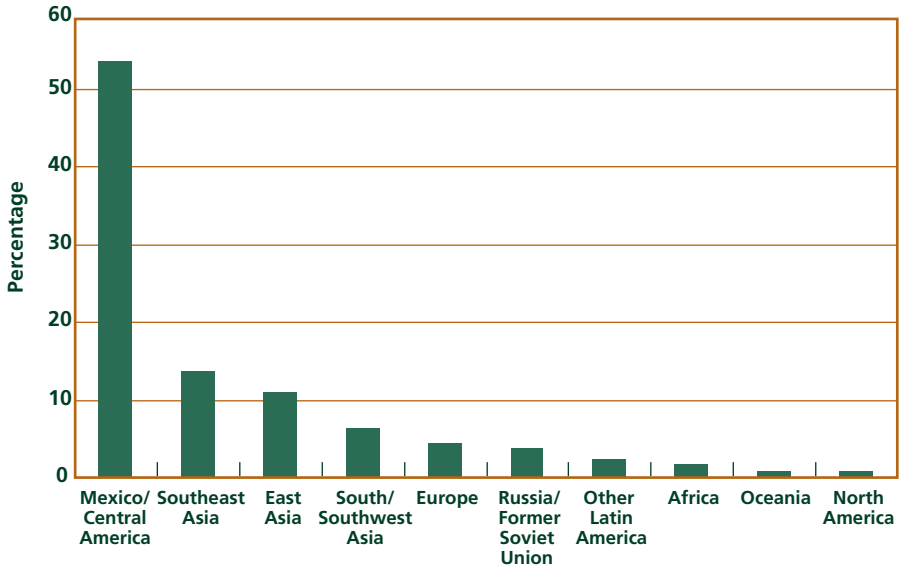
receives far more new immigrants than any other state, its share of the nation's new immigrants has declined somewhat, from 36 percent in 1990 to 25 percent in 2000.

When sending countries are grouped by region, over half of the state's newest immigrants originate in Mexico/Central America and nearly one-third are from Asia (Figure 1). We disaggregate Asian immigrants into three categories: Southeast Asian (14 percent), East Asian (11 percent), and South and Southwest Asian (6 percent). The remainder of this report focuses on the top three sending regions: Mexico/Central America, Southeast Asia, and East Asia, which, taken together, account for nearly 80 percent of the state's newest immigrants in both 2000 and 1990 (not shown).[1] These sending regions will likely continue to be important as federal immigration policy emphasizes family reunification as a primary mode of entry.

English language ability varies by place of origin. Census data show that nearly half of recent immigrants speak Spanish at home (Table 2). The next largest language category is English (8 percent), followed by a number of Asian languages. Spanish-speaking immigrants are the least likely to arrive in the United States with strong English language speaking ability. Nearly one-third report that they do not speak English at all. The same is true for 13 percent of Chinese speakers and 11

Figure 1. Region of Origin for Recently Arrived Immigrants, Census 2000



Source: Authors' calculations using 2000 census data (IPUMS).

Table 2. Languages Spoken at Home by Recent Immigrants, and English Speaking Ability, Ages 5 and Older, Census 2000

	Language Spoken at Home (%)	% Who Speak English			
		Well	Not Well	Not at All	Total
Spanish	49.7	35.5	31.8	32.7	100
English	7.8	100.0	—	—	100
Chinese	6.7	60.3	27.2	12.5	100
Filipino, Tagalog	6.1	91.3	8.2	0.5	100
Vietnamese	4.3	52.1	36.7	11.2	100
Korean	2.5	51.4	41.5	7.2	100
Russian	2.4	65.6	25.6	8.8	100
Other East/Southeast Asian	2.1	66.3	24.5	9.2	100
Japanese	1.6	67.6	30.1	2.4	100
Other or not reported	13.4	82.0	12.5	5.5	100
N/A or blank	3.5	—	—	—	—
Total	100				
English ability among speakers of other languages		51.6	27.0	21.4	100

Source: Authors' calculations using 2000 census data (IPUMS).
Note: Percentages may not sum to 100 because of rounding.

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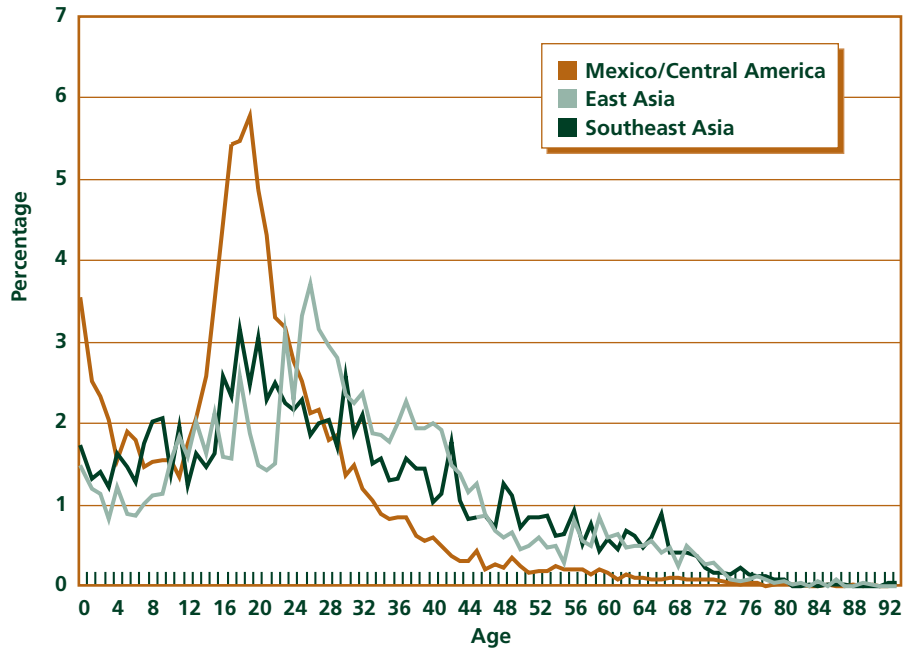
percent of Vietnamese speakers. Among recent immigrants who do not speak English well, three-quarters speak Spanish. Tafoya (2002) found an even higher percentage of Spanish speakers among school-aged English learners in the state (83 percent). Although spoken English is just one measure of language competence, it is a measure that is linked to labor market success (Carnevale, Fry, and Lowell, 2001).

Most recent Mexican/Central American immigrants move to the United States between the ages of 12 and 29, with the peak age at migration being 19 (Figure 2). Relative to the other two groups, a greater proportion of Mexican/Central American immigrants are under age 5. Age at arrival for recent East Asian immigrants is more evenly distributed over the life-course, and the peak migration age is considerably later: age 26. Southeast Asian immigrants' age at arrival is also more evenly distributed across the life-course, with a peak at age 18. On average, recent Mexican/Central American immigrants are nearly a full decade younger than those from East and Southeast Asia (24.5 years versus approximately 34 years, respectively). Age profiles of recent immigrants were nearly identical in 1990, although the peak migration age among new Mexican/Central American immigrants was higher: age 21. Recent Mexican/Central American and East Asian immigrants had the same mean ages as in 2000, but recent Southeast Asian immigrants, on average, were younger (age 31) in 1990.

Among recent immigrants who do not speak English well, three-quarters speak Spanish.

Figure 2. Age at Arrival Among Recent Immigrants, by Place of Birth, Census 2000



Source: Authors' calculations using 2000 census data (IPUMS).

In 2000, every county in the state had at least some new immigrants—at least 1 percent of the population in each county consists of new immigrants (Figure 3).[2] The San Francisco Bay and Los Angeles areas have much higher proportions of new immigrants than does the rest of the state. Under closer examination, it is clear that some areas in these two regions are very densely populated by recent immigrants. Los Angeles and Orange County each have subcounty areas where nearly one in six residents is a new immigrant (Figure 4). The area with the highest concentration of new immigrants is found in Santa Clara County, with 18 percent of its population being new immigrants (Figure 5).

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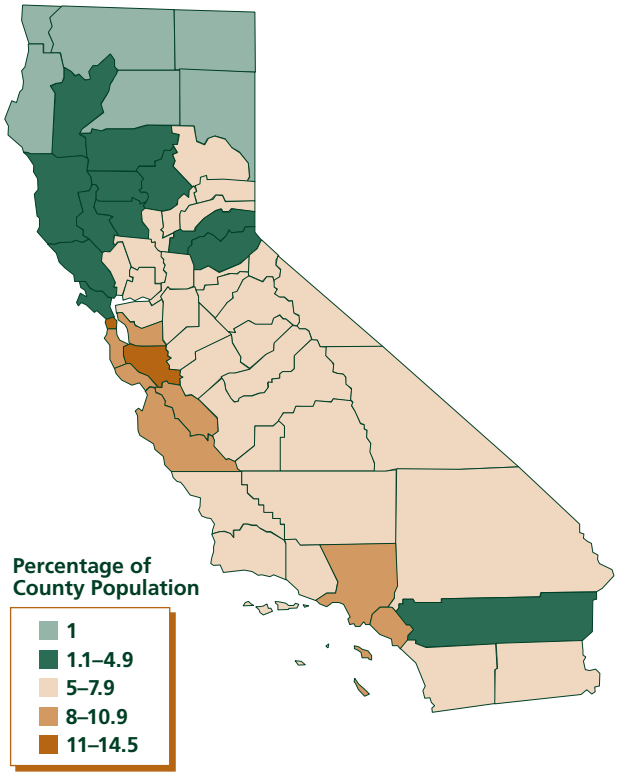
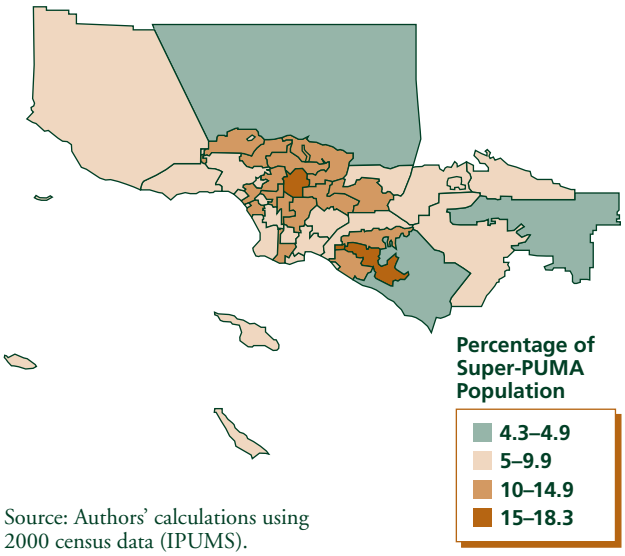
The Los Angeles and San Francisco Bay areas are the settlement regions for nearly 75 percent of the state's new immigrants.

Figure 3. Recent Immigrants as a Share of Total Population, by County, Census 2000



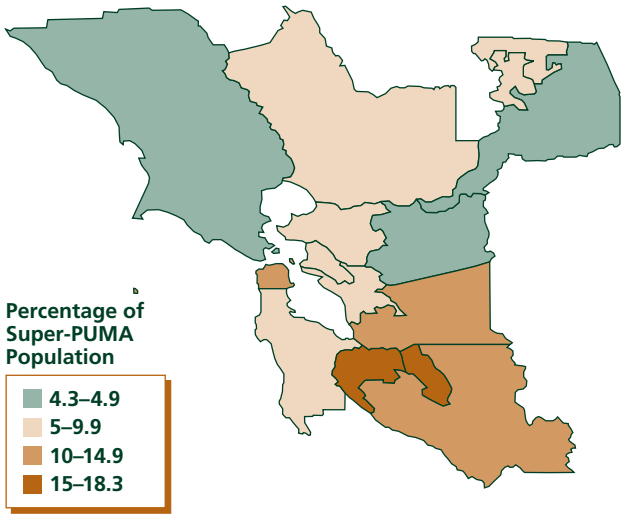
Source: Authors' calculations using 2000 census data (IPUMS).

Figure 4. Recent Immigrants as a Share of Total Population, by Super-PUMA for Los Angeles Area, Census 2000



Source: Authors' calculations using 2000 census data (IPUMS).

Figure 5. Recent Immigrants as a Share of Total Population, by Super-PUMA for Bay Area, Census 2000



Source: Authors' calculations using 2000 census data (IPUMS).

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The Los Angeles and San Francisco Bay areas are the settlement regions for nearly 75 percent of the state's new immigrants. However, settlement patterns of new immigrants vary somewhat according to the immigrants' place of birth. Mexican/Central American immigrants are less concentrated in the Bay Area than are other immigrants, and nearly one-quarter live outside the state's three major urban areas (Table 3). Only 7 percent of East Asian immigrants and 16 percent of Southeast Asian immigrants live outside the state's major urban centers.

Family and Housing for New Immigrants

In our description of new immigrant demographic characteristics above, immigrants are treated individually. Here, where family composition and housing are discussed, our unit of measure is the family. New immigrant families are defined as those in which at least one parent is foreign-born and has immigrated within the last 10 years (i.e., not every member of the family is a recent immigrant). New immigrants frequently enter the country with relatives, and they may settle with relatives who have been in the United States longer than 10 years. Some recent immigrants have children who were born in the United States—according to the 2000 Census, 70 percent of new immigrant parents have native-born children. In this report, children under age 18 living with their parents in such families are considered immigrant children, although they may have been born in the United States.[3]

The majority of recent immigrants live in married-couple families with children under age 18. This is especially true for recent immigrants from Mexico/Central America (Figure 6). New immigrants from the two other important sending regions, Southeast Asia and East Asia, have a higher share of immigrant families composed of a married couple and either no children or children ages 18 and older. Mexican/Central American new immigrants are somewhat more likely than are Southeast or East Asian immigrants to live in other-relative households (i.e., households where the adults are related to the householder).[4] Fewer than 15 percent of new immigrants live in nonrelative households. This final category includes single individuals. These distinctions in family composition are important in our examination of well-being measures in the next section.

Most recent immigrants live in rental housing, and the remainder live in owned housing—i.e., housing owned by someone living in the immigrant household (Figure 7). However, there are some important differences in these arrangements by sending region. Nearly three-quarters of Mexican/Central American new immigrant families live in rental housing, whereas over 40 percent of Southeast Asian and East Asian new immigrant families live in owned housing. Among all Californians, nearly 60 percent live in owned housing. Housing costs as a share of income do not vary much by whether recent immigrants rent or own,

Table 3. Geographic Concentration, by Place of Origin, Census 2000

	Share by Place of Origin			
	Mexico/ Central America	Southeast Asia	East Asia	All Recent Immigrants
Regional concentration, %				
In Los Angeles Area	55.5	44.6	51.9	50.5
In San Francisco Bay Area	14.3	30.5	36.0	23.4
In San Diego Area	6.3	9.2	5.2	6.8
Other	23.9	15.7	6.9	19.3
	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Authors' calculations using 2000 census data (IPUMS).
Note: Here, the Los Angeles Area includes parts of San Bernardino and Riverside Counties.

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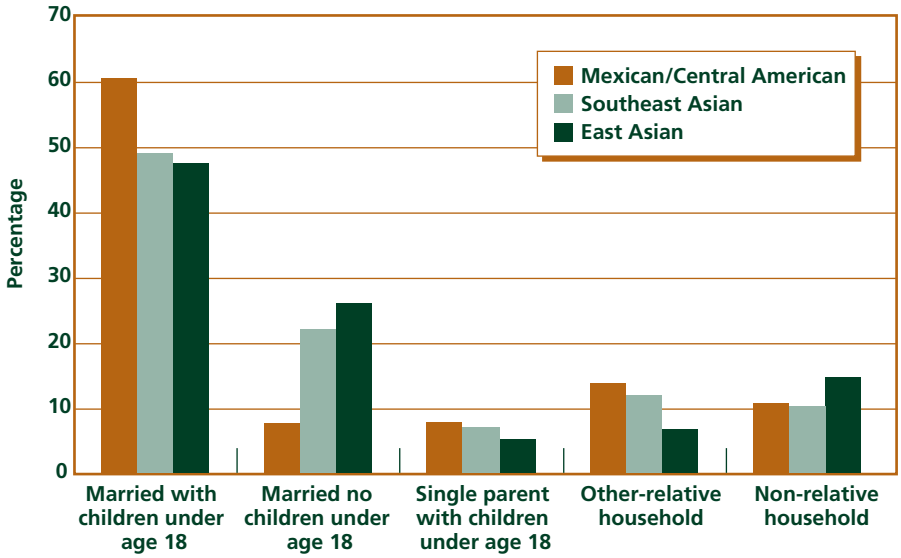
Nearly 80 percent of recent Mexican/Central American immigrants live in crowded conditions.

nor do they vary tremendously by sending region. The proportion of recent immigrants with high housing costs hovers around 40 percent (Figure 8).[5] Except Mexicans/Central Americans, those living in rental housing spend a slightly higher proportion of their household income on housing costs. East Asian immigrants in rental households are the most likely to have high housing costs. Among all California homeowning households, 31 percent have high housing costs, but among all California renting households, the share is 41 percent.

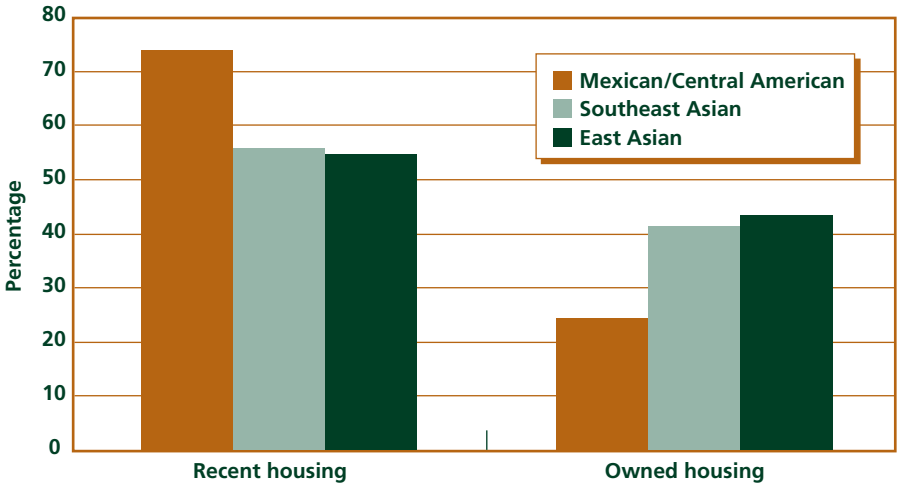
Although housing costs as a share of household income do not vary substantially by immigrant region of birth, a key measure of housing conditions—household crowding—does. A household is defined as crowded if there is more than one member per room, excluding bathrooms. By this measure, nearly 80 percent of recent Mexican/Central American immigrants live in crowded conditions (Figure 9). Crowding is lower but still high among Southeast Asians (57 percent) and East Asians (36 percent). By comparison, 27 percent of all California households

Figure 6. Family Composition Among Recent Immigrants, Census 2000



Source: Authors' calculations using 2000 census data (PUMS).

Figure 7. Housing Tenure Among Recent Immigrants, by Place of Origin, Census 2000



Source: Authors' calculations using 2000 census data (PUMS).
Note: Less than 3 percent of recent immigrants live in group quarters or occupy a housing unit without paying rent.

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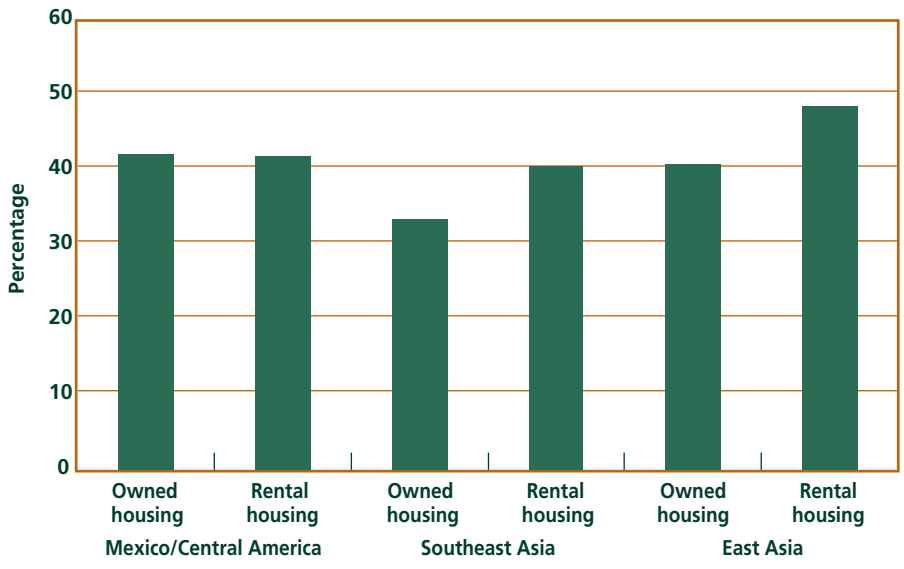
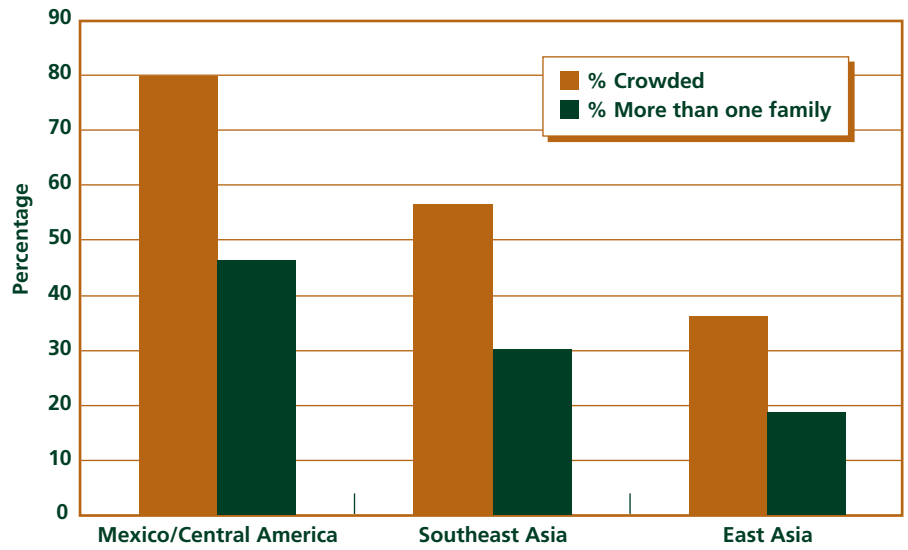
Figure 8. Percentage of New Immigrants with High Housing Costs, by Place of Origin and Housing Tenure, Census 2000



Source: Authors' calculations using 2000 census data (PUMS).

Figure 9. Crowding and Multifamily Homes, by Place of Origin, Census 2000



Source: Authors' calculations using 2000 census data (PUMS).

are crowded. Not surprisingly, crowding and the presence of multiple family households seem to be related.[6] Recent Mexican/Central American immigrants are the most likely to live with more than one family, and East Asians are the most likely to live in single-family households.

Crowding among immigrant families varies somewhat by region of settlement in the state, but not much.[7] Over 70 percent of recent immigrant families living in the Central Coast are living in crowded households (Table 4). Even in the regions with the least crowding among recent immigrants—San Diego and the Bay Area—more than half live in crowded housing conditions. Areas with the highest incidence of crowding have the lowest rates of home ownership among recent immigrants and immigrant families (approximately 25 percent in the Central and South Coast regions). Home ownership rates are highest in the Inland Empire, Sacramento Metro, and Far North regions (each approximately 40 percent).

Immigrant Activities and Family Resources

The variations in housing burdens and conditions are smaller than the variations among new immigrant groups in family resources

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Nearly one-third of Mexican/Central American immigrant families live below the poverty line, whereas only 16 percent of Southeast Asian and 21 percent of East Asian recent immigrants fall under the poverty threshold.

Table 4. Crowding and Home Ownership for Immigrant Families, by Region, Census 2000

	% Crowded	% Owner	Number of Recent Immigrants
Far North	55.4	39.1	29,574
Sacramento Metro	55.0	40.0	142,810
Bay Area	53.0	35.1	852,164
San Joaquin Valley	66.9	32.8	315,976
Central Coast	71.5	24.3	142,613
Inland Empire	62.8	42.4	257,674
South Coast	67.7	26.4	1,747,523
San Diego	53.3	29.2	264,444

Source: Authors' calculations using 2000 census data (PUMS).
Note: The counties included in each region are as follows.
Far North: Butte, Colusa, Del Norte, Glenn, Humboldt, Lake, Lassen, Mendocino, Modoc, Shasta, Siskiyou, Tehama, and Trinity.
Sacramento Metro: El Dorado, Nevada, Placer, Plumas, Sacramento, Sierra, Sutter, Yolo, and Yuba.
Bay Area: Alameda, Contra Costa, Marin, Napa, San Francisco, San Mateo, Santa Clara, Solano, and Sonoma.
San Joaquin Valley: Alpine, Amador, Calaveras, Fresno, Inyo, Kern, Kings, Madera, Mariposa, Merced, Mono, San Joaquin, Stanislaus, Tulare, and Tuolumne.
Central Coast: Monterey, San Benito, San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara, and Santa Cruz.
Inland Empire: Imperial, Riverside, and San Bernardino.
South Coast: Los Angeles, Orange, and Ventura.
San Diego: San Diego.

and other measures of well-being. In this section, we examine educational attainment and school enrollment among immigrants and then turn to measures of resources at the family level.

On the whole, Mexican/Central American immigrants are much less educated than other immigrant groups. Fewer than 5 percent of Mexican/Central American recent immigrants ages 20 and older have a college degree (Figure 10). In contrast, more than one-quarter of Southeast Asian and nearly 45 percent of East Asian recent immigrants have at least a college degree. More than 70 percent of Mexican/Central American recent immigrants have less than a high school diploma. A much smaller proportion of Southeast Asian and East Asian recent immigrants have less than a high school diploma: 26 and 14 percent, respectively.

At every age, Southeast and East Asian immigrants are more likely than are Mexican/Central American immigrants to be in school (Figure 11). This is especially true at ages 18 to 24, when fewer than 20 percent of Mexican/Central American young men and women are in school. At these ages, approximately 60 percent of Southeast Asian young men and women and over 80 percent of East Asian young men and women are in school. At younger ages (under age 25) young women are slightly more likely than men to be enrolled in school.

Educational attainment is strongly linked to labor force performance (Reed and Cheng, 2003), as is age and English language ability (Carnevale, Fry, and Lowell, 2001). Thus, it is not surprising to find that recent Mexican/Central American immigrant families are not doing as well as other new immigrant families in many measures of well-being, given their younger age structure, lower degree of spoken English proficiency, and lower levels of

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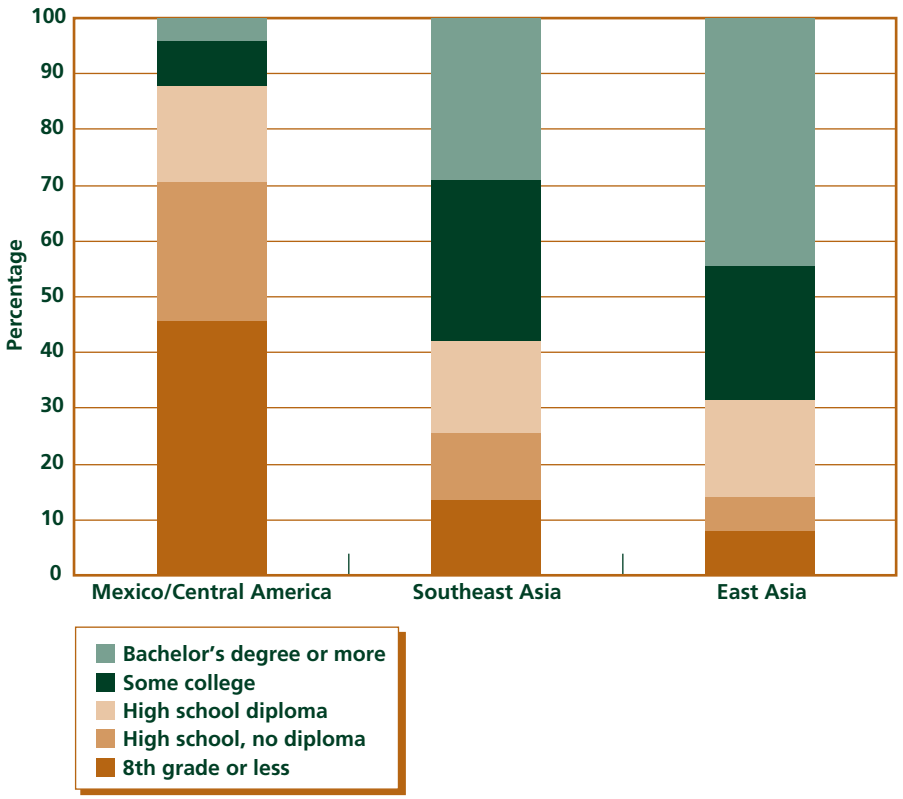
Figure 10. Educational Attainment of Recent Immigrants, Ages 20 and Older, by Place of Origin, Census 2000



Source: Authors' calculations using 2000 census data (IPUMS).

educational attainment. Nearly one-third of Mexican/Central American immigrant families live below the poverty line, whereas only 16 percent of Southeast Asian and 21 percent of East Asian recent immigrants fall under the poverty threshold (Table 5). East Asian and Mexican/Central American immigrants have substantially higher poverty rates than Californians as a whole: 15 percent. Public assistance rates are highest among Southeast Asian immigrants, at nearly twice the level for Mexicans/Central Americans. This may be a result of higher levels of eligibility because of higher rates of citizenship and refugee status.[8]

Most new immigrant families have at least one working member, although there are variations by place of birth and family structure.[9] The share of families without a working member is lower among new Mexican/Central American immigrants (14 percent) than among Southeast Asian and East Asian immigrants (17 and 21 percent, respectively). However, these higher family employment rates do not appear to be strongly linked to well-being for Mexicans/Central Americans. Median family income levels are more dramatically different between Mexican/Central American and Asian immigrants than they are between Southeast and East Asians. Overall, the median family income of each of the Asian groups is nearly twice that of Mexicans/Central Americans. This gap persists when the comparisons are made by family structure—Mexican/Central American married-couple families (with and without children under age 18) have median incomes of about one-half that of Southeast Asian married-couple families. However, for some family structures, median income is actually higher among Mexican/Central American new immigrants than among East Asian new immigrants: those living in relative households and those living in non-relative households.

Recent immigrants living in the Bay Area appear to be much better off than those in the rest of the state. Poverty rates are the lowest, and public assistance rates are second-lowest in the state (Table 6). There is little regional variation in the share of families without a working member. Median family income exceeds $35,000 among immigrants and immigrant

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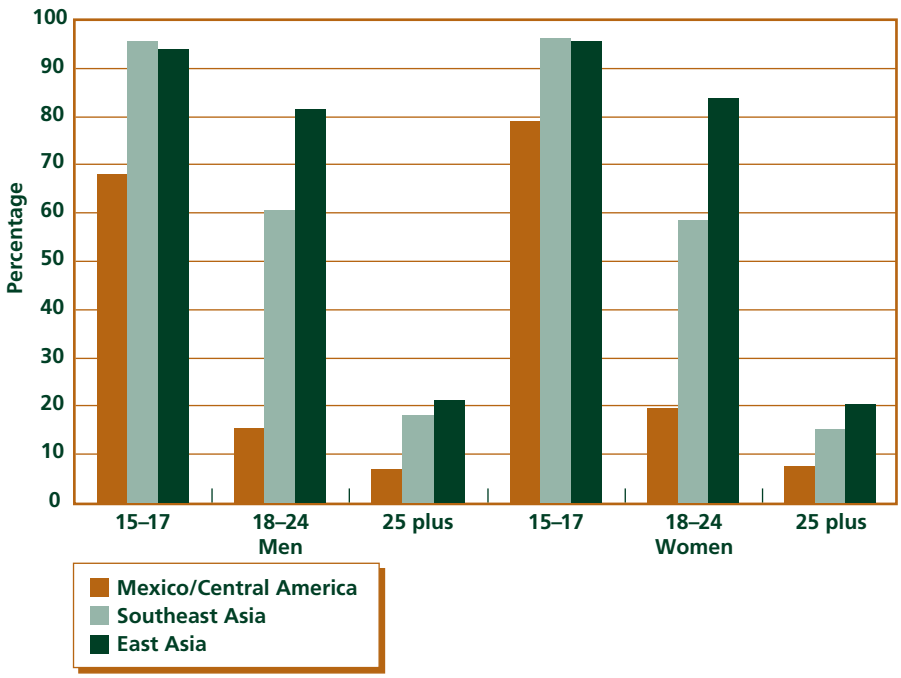
Figure 11. School Enrollment of Recent Immigrants, by Place of Origin, Sex, and Age, Census 2000



Source: Authors' calculations using 2000 census data (IPUMS).

families living in the Bay Area. Recall from Table 3 that the Bay Area is heavily populated by Southeast and East Asian immigrants, whose education and income levels are substantially higher than those of Mexican/Central American immigrants. However, the cost of living and wages are higher for all Bay Area residents than elsewhere in the state. The San Joaquin Valley's recent immigrants lie at the other end of the spectrum. Poverty is nearly three times as high, and median family income is about half that of their Bay Area counterparts. These findings are reflected in the general population as well (Reed and Swearingen, 2001). Among the other regions, median income does not vary dramatically.

Progress: How Are Last Decade's New Immigrants Faring 10 Years Later?

How will the new immigrants of today be doing 10 years from now? To answer this question, we compare outcomes for immigrants here 0 to 10 years with those for immigrants here 10 to 20 years. However, this approach is suggestive, rather than predictive, for a number of reasons (Borjas, 1990). First, to allow a precise comparison, the new immigrants of 2000 would need to have characteristics identical to the characteristics of new immigrants in 1990. Using the preceding analysis, we have found that these two arrival cohorts are quite similar, although we note some differences. Second, to assume that the trajectories observed for the new immigrants in 1990 will be similar to those for the new immigrants in 2000, there would need to be no intervening policy or economic changes different from those experienced by last decade's new immigrants. Third, even with the first and second conditions met, it would be problematic to attribute changes between 1990 and 2000 as progress for the entire cohort of those immigrants, because the less successful may have returned to their place of birth or moved on (i.e., to another state or country). Thus, those who are successful are more heavily weighted in the later decade.

Given these caveats, we can nonetheless gain an approximate idea of how today's new immigrants might fare by examining the progress of the cohort preceding them. In this section, we first examine language ability, educational attainment, citizenship, and wages among individual immi-

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Table 5. Resources, by Place of Origin and Family Composition, Census 2000

	% Poor	% on Public Assistance	% No Member a Citizen	% No Member Working	Median Income
Mexico/Central America					
Married with children under age 18	31.8	7.7	14.7	4.2	$23,500
Married no children under age 18	15.5	2.3	63.3	9.3	$24,500
Single parent with children under age 18	42.1	14.3	30.9	30.6	$8,500
Relative household	17.8	2.0	95.0	36.5	$7,500
Non-relative household	48.9	1.2	96.7	27.9	$9,500
Total	31.3	6.3	39.4	13.6	$17,500
Southeast Asia					
Married with children under age 18	16.2	19.3	19.2	6.3	$42,500
Married no children under age 18	7.1	5.1	30.5	14.3	$41,500
Single parent with children under age 18	13.1	12.6	38.0	18.7	$18,500
Relative household	9.3	3.7	78.1	47.3	$7,500
Non-relative household	44.0	1.6	80.1	32.8	$11,500
Total	16.1	12.0	36.3	16.5	$31,500
East Asia					
Married with children under age 18	13.4	1.6	35.7	5.3	$50,500
Married no children under age 18	10.1	4.1	56.7	19.4	$38,500
Single parent with children under age 18	36.3	1.9	65.8	35.2	$15,500
Relative household	18.3	4.9	84.4	65.2	< $5,000
Non-relative household	58.1	1.6	91.1	48.0	< $5,000
Total	20.6	2.5	54.2	20.8	$33,500

Source: Authors' calculations using 2000 census data (PUMS).

grants. We then turn to the resources of immigrant families.

The cohort of immigrants who arrived 10 to 20 years earlier shows better spoken English language ability than those who arrived within the last 10 years. Ten to 20 years after arrival, 35 percent report that they do not speak English well or at all, which is lower than the 43 percent reported by recent immigrants in 2000 and down from the 42 percent reported by this cohort when they were new immigrants in 1990 (not shown). Moreover, many fewer report themselves to

Table 6. Resources Among Recent Immigrant Families, by Settlement Region, Census 2000

	% Poor	% on Public Assistance	% No Member a Citizen	% No Member Working	Median Income
Far North	30.7	3.0	35.0	13.9	$21,500
Sacramento Metro	25.2	16.1	42.9	16.1	$24,500
Bay Area	14.5	4.6	46.6	13.3	$35,500
San Joaquin Valley	38.0	11.6	31.7	13.6	$18,500
Central Coast	27.4	4.9	37.8	13.3	$20,500
Inland Empire	30.6	7.8	37.0	14.0	$20,500
South Coast	26.8	6.5	42.9	16.5	$20,500
San Diego	23.1	7.3	36.9	13.1	$25,500

Source: Authors' calculations using 2000 census data (PUMS).

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17 percent of Spanish speakers and nearly 10 percent of Chinese speakers report that they do not speak English at all more than 10 years after arriving in the United States.

be in the category of not speaking English at all 10 to 20 years after arrival. Yet 17 percent of Spanish speakers and nearly 10 percent of Chinese speakers report that they do not speak English at all more than 10 years after arriving in the United States (Table 7).

Progress in educational attainment varies by immigrant region of origin (Table 8). Comparing new immigrants ages 20 and older in 1990 with long-term immigrants ages 30 and older in 2000, we find among East Asians and Southeast Asians an increase in the share of immigrants with a bachelor's degree or more (last column), and we see among Mexicans/Central Americans an increase in the share with a high school diploma or more (last column). However, even with these improvements, long-standing immigrants from Mexico/Central America do not reach the levels of educational attainment recent Asian immigrants possess upon

Table 7. Percentage Not Speaking English at All, by Language Spoken at Home

	Recent Arrivals		Long-Term
	Census 2000	Census 1990	Census 2000
Spanish	32.7	26.3	17.0
English	—	—	—
Chinese	12.5	14.5	9.1
Filipino, Tagalog	0.5	0.7	0.6
Vietnamese	11.2	8.6	6.3
Korean	7.2	10.9	5.4
Russian	8.8	13.4	7.6
Other East/Southeast Asian	9.2	13.9	10.3
Japanese	2.4	3.1	0.7
Other or not reported	5.5	5.8	4.6

Source: Authors' calculations using 1990 and 2000 census data (IPUMS).
Notes: Ages 5 and older for recent immigrants; ages 15 and older for long-term."Recent arrivals" includes immigrants in the United States 0–10 years. "Long-term" includes immigrants in the United States 11–20 years.

Table 8. Educational Attainment

	% Recent Arrivals		% Long-Term	
	Census 2000 (1)	Census 1990 (2)	Census 2000 (3)	% Change (3–2)/2
Mexican/Central American				
8th grade or less	45.7	49.5	47.5	–4
High school, no diploma	25.1	23.5	23.5	0
High school diploma	17.1	14.2	14.7	4
Some college	8.2	9.5	10.5	11
Bachelor's degree or more	3.9	3.3	3.9	18
Southeast Asian				
8th grade or less	13.5	22.7	19.1	–16
High school, no diploma	12.2	12.0	10.7	–11
High school diploma	16.3	14.9	14.1	–5
Some college	28.9	26.0	25.6	–2
Bachelor's degree or more	29.1	24.4	30.6	25
East Asian				
8th grade or less	8.0	13.6	12.2	–10
High school, no diploma	6.2	8.8	8.1	–8
High school diploma	17.2	20.2	19.3	–4
Some college	24.2	25.1	19.7	–22
Bachelor's degree or more	44.5	32.4	40.8	26

Source: Authors' calculations using 1990 and 2000 census data (IPUMS).
Note: Ages 20 and older for recent immigrants; ages 30 and older for long-term.

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arrival. Although the percentage of Mexican/Central American immigrants with college degrees increased by an impressive share (18 percent), the overall level of attainment is still very low (less than 4 percent). It is also notable that the educational attainment of new immigrants in 2000 is somewhat higher than it was among new immigrants in 1990.

Predictably, a greater percentage of long-term immigrants than new immigrants are citizens. This result persists across regions of origin (Table 9). Some documented immigrants will have become eligible for citizenship. Among long-term immigrants, Mexican/Central American immigrants have the lowest rates of citizenship (22 percent, compared to 62 and 69 percent for East and Southeast Asian families, respectively). Mexican/Central American immigrants may be more likely to be undocumented, or may stay for shorter periods at a time, and thereby be less likely to seek or be eligible to obtain citizenship. It is important to note that citizenship levels were higher for new Mexican/Central American and East Asian immigrants in 1990 than they were among the more recent cohort in 2000. The Immigration Reform and Control Act allowed many undocumented immigrants who resided in the United States here before 1986 to legalize. Unless there is a similar amnesty program, the cohort of recent arrivals identified in the 2000 census would be unlikely to attain such high levels of citizenship in the next 10 years. However, if the Golden State Residency Program (Little Hoover Commission, 2002) is implemented, noncitizen immigrants participating in the program might be eligible for many of the services currently available only to legal residents and citizens and might increase their civic participation (although they would not be able to vote).

Table 9. Citizenship

	% Recent Arrivals		% Long-Term
	Census 2000	Census 1990	Census 2000
Mexican/Central American	5.7	10.1	21.5
Southeast Asian	25.3	19.9	68.7
East Asian	11.8	13.5	61.8
Other	14.1	13.2	55.5

Source: Authors' calculations using 1990 and 2000 census data (IPUMS).

Median hourly wages rose among full-time workers in the intervening decade for all sending regions. East Asian full-time workers increased their median hourly wages by roughly one-third (Table 10), whereas Southeast Asian immigrants and male Mexican/Central American immigrants saw median wages increase by approximately one-quarter. Mexican/Central American female immigrants saw the lowest wage growth (15 percent). Differences in levels of wages were also dramatic. Wages for East Asian immigrants were almost double those for Mexican/Central American immigrants in 2000. New Mexican/Central American and Southeast Asian full-time workers actually had lower wages in 2000 than in 1990 (adjusted for inflation), which is just the opposite of the improving trend noted for educational attainment.

Comparing new immigrant families with immigrant families who have been in this country for a decade (long-term immigrants), we see an expected increase in the proportion living in housing owned by the household head. This difference applies, although in varying magnitudes, across regions of origin (Table 11). For long-standing as well as new immigrants, East Asians have the highest rate of home ownership, at nearly twice the rate of Mexicans/Central Americans. Crowding declines from the level measured among recent immigrants in 1990 for that cohort 10 to 20 years after arrival. However, these declines are quite small among Mexicans/Central Americans.

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Table 10. Median Hourly Wages Among Recent Immigrants, Full-Time Workers

	Recent Arrivals		Long-Term	
	Census 2000 (1)	Census 1990 (2)	Census 2000 (3)	% Change (3–2)/2
Mexican/Central American				
Men	$7.15	$7.72	$9.62	25
Women	$6.21	$6.50	$7.50	15
Southeast Asian				
Men	$11.83	$12.48	$15.87	27
Women	$11.54	$11.57	$14.58	26
East Asian				
Men	$18.32	$14.23	$18.75	32
Women	$12.78	$10.81	$14.42	33

Source: Authors' calculations using 1990 and 2000 census data (IPUMS).
Notes: Full-time workers are considered those who work at least 35 hours per week, at least 35 weeks per year. Data for recent immigrants are for ages 16–54 and for long-term immigrants ages 26–64. Statistics are adjusted to 2000 dollars.

As expected, immigrants with more time in the United States have lower poverty rates than those recently arrived. This is true for each of the major immigrant groups. However, declines in poverty are most dramatic for East and Southeast Asians. Poverty levels among Mexicans/Central Americans decline by only one-fifth.

Among new immigrants, median family income was slightly lower for those arriving in the 1980s than for those arriving in the 1990s among most regions of origin, and it increased with time spent in the United States by a similar rate for each of the regions of origin. Mexican/Central American median family income is $9,000 higher among long-term immigrants than it was for recent immigrants in 1990. For long-term Southeast Asian and East Asian immigrants, the increase is $17,000.

Poverty rates are dropping for all groups, but Mexican/Central American families are actually more likely to use public assistance with time in the United States. Mexican/Central American recent immigrants are younger and therefore more likely to have young children born in the intervening decade, which would qualify them for public assistance, both because they have young enough children and because these children would be U.S. citizens. Table 11 also shows the concurrent decline in the share of families without a citizen member.

Family employment rates increase for all groups. Mexican/Central American families are the least likely to be without a working member—90 percent have at least one. Ten to 20 years after arrival, Southeast Asian and East Asian immigrant families are equally likely to have a working member: approximately 12 percent do.

Conclusions

California's new immigrants constitute a significant component of the state's overall population. Not only are they a sizable proportion of the population of urban centers in the San Francisco Bay and Los Angeles areas, but they can also be found in every county of the state.

The challenges that new immigrants face—navigating the complexities of language, employment, civic participation, housing, and education—have been documented in this report. In many cases, the outcomes depend upon region of origin, living arrangements (which may determine one's eligibility to immigrate in the first place), or the amount of time living in the United States.

We note that immigrants who have spent more time in the United States fare better in many respects than their newly arrived counterparts—educational attainment, levels of poverty, wages, employment, family income, and home ownership in particular seem to

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Table 11. Immigrant Family Resource Measures, by Region of Origin and Length of U.S. Residence

	% Recent Arrivals		% Long-Term	
	Census 2000 (1)	Census 1990 (2)	Census 2000 (3)	% Change (3–2)/2
Mexican/Central American				
Housing				
Own	24.4	16.8	39.1	133
Crowded	79.9	79.8	75.4	–6
Resources				
Poor	31.3	31.9	25.2	–21
No member a citizen	39.4	47.1	16.2	–66
Public assistance	6.3	4.9	8.1	64
Median income	$17,500	$16,500	$25,500	55
No member working	13.6	13.7	8.1	–41
Southeast Asian				
Housing				
Own	41.3	36.1	55.3	53
Crowded	56.5	64.5	48.2	–25
Resources				
Poor	16.1	25.2	15.6	–38
No member a citizen	36.3	35.7	7.5	–79
Public assistance	12.0	29.6	14.0	–53
Median income	$31,500	$27,500	$44,500	62
No member working	16.5	28.5	12.0	–58
East Asian				
Housing				
Own	43.3	50.7	65.7	30
Crowded	36.1	43.3	31.8	–27
Resources				
Poor	20.6	18.0	9.6	–47
No member a citizen	54.2	53.0	12.9	–76
Public assistance	2.5	6.8	3.1	–54
Median income	$33,500	$33,500	$50,500	51
No member working	20.8	16.9	11.6	–31

Source: Authors' calculations using 1990 and 2000 census data (PUMS).
Note: Median income statistics are adjusted to 2000 dollars.

improve with time spent in the new country, although cross-decade comparisons are subject to the caveats noted above. However, the gap between Mexicans/Central Americans and Asians (East and Southeast) persists. On many important measures, the rate of progress for Mexicans/Central Americans is lower than for Southeast and East Asians. For example, educational attainment and wage growth rates are lower, which is probably related to lower levels of school enrollment among Mexicans/Central Americans. It is worth considering what can be done to increase the growth rate

More general education may prove useful in improving the lot of recent immigrants, particularly those from Mexico and Central America.

in wages and education among recent immigrants.

To this end, two particular areas stand out. Language proficiency naturally tends to improve with time spent in the new country, but this study shows that even after 10 to 20 years spent in the United States, significant numbers of immigrants continue to struggle with English. Targeting ESL (English as a Second Language) or related programs (literacy, citizenship, or vocational training) to these immigrants (primarily Spanish, Vietnamese, and Chinese speakers) could help improve this population's command of the language and improve its integration into the general workforce.

More general education may also prove useful in improving the lot of recent immigrants, particularly those from Mexico and Central America. As we have seen, this group tends to arrive in the United States at young ages, with relatively low levels of education. The previous decade's immigrants appear to have taken advantage of opportunities to continue their education

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after they have arrived in the United States, and targeting secondary, postsecondary, and adult education programs to this population may prove especially effective.

Has the pace of progress on the many well-being measures discussed here changed over time, or for any particular groups, and is it fast enough? A recent study by Smith (2003) at the national level suggests that concern about progress among Hispanics has been exaggerated. He finds that sons and grandsons of Mexican immigrants do make great strides relative to native-born non-Hispanic whites. However, it is clear that California's Mexican/Central American immigrants clearly have large deficits to overcome and that it may take generations. We may need a similar study at the state level, which also considers whether resources invested in today's recent immigrants result in a better prepared second generation of students and workers. ◆

Notes

[1] Southeast Asian countries are the Philippines, Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, and Thailand. Countries in the East Asia category are China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Korea (North and South), Japan, Macau, and Mongolia. South/Southwest Asian countries include India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh. The Mexico/Central America category comprises Mexico, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Belize, Costa Rica, and Panama.

[2] These calculations are based on the regions created by the census called Super Public Use Microdata Areas (Super-PUMAs). Each Super-PUMA contains approximately 400,000 people. In some cases (e.g., the Far North), Super-PUMAs incorporate more than one county, and we used the same Super-PUMA measure for each constituent county. In many cases (e.g., Los Angeles County), counties have more than one Super-PUMA. In these cases, we calculated a county-level measure.

[3] There are approximately 400 new immigrant children (in the sample of 11,669 new immigrant children) who were not clearly related to any adult in their household. We assigned them to the household head. Their parents may have been in the household, but they could not be identified as such because neither parent nor child was a relative of the household head. It is possible that some of the adults classified in the "single" category were actually parents of these children, and any bias in the resources or well-being of these children is likely to be in the positive direction, because household heads are more likely to be better off relative to the unrelated adults in their households.

[4] This includes a small number of single parents living with their adult children.

[5] Households with high housing costs are defined in this report as households that spend at least 30 percent of their household income on housing costs.

[6] Multiple family households can include a primary family and an unrelated individual.

[7] Some of the Super-PUMA boundaries prevent us from using the nine regions described in Johnson (2002), and we note the exceptions here. The Inland Empire includes Imperial, Riverside, and San Bernardino Counties. San Diego County is not grouped with Imperial County. The Sacramento Metro region here includes Nevada, Plumas, Sierra, Sutter, and Yuba Counties, in addition to El Dorado, Placer, Sacramento, and Yolo Counties. Similarly, the San Joaquin Valley region includes Alpine, Amador, Calaveras, Inyo, Mariposa, Mono, and Tuolumne Counties, along with Fresno, Kern, Kings, Madera, Merced, San Joaquin, Stanislaus, and Tulare Counties.

[8] National Immigration Law Center (2003).

[9] A working family member is one who worked at all in the last year.

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